

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 AID-05

ACDA-10 SCCT-01 AGR-10 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01

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P 091845Z APR 76

FM AMCONSUL HERMOSILLO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 989

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY

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UNCLAS HERMOSILLO 119

E.O 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, MX

SUBJECT: LAND INVASION IN SOUTHER SONORA CREATES NEW
CRISIS

1. THE INVASION OF PRIVATE LAND IN SOUTHER SONORA AND
NORTHERN SINALOA, WHICH HAS CREATED A CLIMATE OF TENSION
DURING PAST SIX MONTH, REACHED A NEW CRITICAL STAGE THIS
WEEK. TWO THOUSAND ARMED CAMPESINOS OCCUPIED LAND IN THE
YAQUI VALLEY NEAR CIUDAD OBREGON, TOOK SONORA STATE DELEGATE
OF THE SECRETARIAT OF AGRICULTURAL REFORM AND TWO
OF HIS ASSISTANTS CAPTIVE DECLARING THEY WILL HOLD THEM AS
HOSTAGES UNTIL THEIR DEMANDS FOR LAND WILL MET.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS, SRA DELEGATE, RICARDO MOLINA
WILSON, ENGINEERS HECTOR SARMIENTO CHAVEZ AND ISMAEL GON-
ZALEZ FELIX, WERE HELD BY THE CAMPESINOS WHEN THEY VISITED
THE SEIZED LAND LAST SUNDAY TO DISCUSS THEIR
CLAIMS WITH THE INVADERS. ALSO ACCORDING TO THE PRESS REPORTS,
THE CAMPESINOS WARNED THAT THAT THEIR THREE HOSTAGES
WOULD BE "EXECUTED" IF THE ARMY INTERVENED.

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3. THE REFERENCE TO THE ARMY AROSE FROM THE PRESENCE

IN THE AREA OF ELEMENTS OF THE 34TH INFANTRY BATTALION (FROM HERMOSILLO) AND THE 18TH CAVALRY (FROM CIUDAD OBREGON) UNDER THE COMMAND OF DIVISION GENERAL BASILIO PEREZ ORTIZ. ALONG WITH THE TROOPS, THE 400-HECTARE BLOCK SEIZED AND "FORTIFIED" BY THE CAMPESINOS WAS SURROUNDED ALSO BY ELEMENTS OF THE SONORA STATE JUDICIAL POLICE.

4. SONORA GOVERNOR CARRILLO MARCOR URGED CALM, ADHERENCE TO LAW AND PATIENCE ON THE PART OF THE LAND CLAIMANTS, AND WAS REPORTED IN CONTACT WITH THE PRESIDENT AND FEDERAL AUTHORITIES. AGRARIAN REFORM SECRETARY FELIX BARRA GARCIA, ACCOMPANIED BY ENGINEER LEANDRO ROVIROSA WADE, CAME TO CIUDAD OBREGON ON APRIL 8, WHERE THEY JOINED GOVERNOR CARRILLO IN A MEETING WITH CAMPESINOS. SHORTLY AFTER THEY ARRIVED THE CAMPESINOS, REPRESENTED BY A DELEGATION LED BY CELESTINO SALCEDO MONTEON, RELEASED THEIR THREE HOSTAGES UNHARMED IN RETURN FOR ASSURANCE THAT FORCE WOULD NOT BE USED TO DISLODGE THEM FROM THE LAND THEY HAD INVADED. AS SOON AS MOLINA WILSON WAS RELEASED HE REQUESTED THAT THE TROOPS AND POLICE WITHDRAW FROM THEIR POSITIONS. (NOTE: CELESTINO SALCEDO MONTEON IS NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF CNC).

5. FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ARE NOW BEING HELD TO CONSIDER THE CLAIMS OF 22 GROUPS OF CAMPESINOS (SOME/CLAIMS DATING BACK 25 TO 30 YEARS) FOR A TOTAL EXCEEDING 10,000 HECTARES. A RELATED PROBLEM, ALSO BEING DISCUSSED, IS ADEQUATE WATER SUPPLY WHICH MAY BE SOLVED BY (1) SEALING CANAL BOTTOMS TO PREVENT SEEPAGE AS A WAY TO INCREASE AREAS UNDER IRRIGATION IN THE DISTRICT OR (2) REDUCING WATER RIGHTS FOR SMALL LANDOWNERS FROM 100 HECTARES TO 20 HECTARES. THE FIRST SOLUTION APPEARS MOST LIKELY TO BE ADOPTED.

6. MEANWHILE, FEAR IS GROWING IN THE STATE THAT THE FAILURE OF THE FEDERAL AND STATE AUTHORITIES TO REACT ENERGETICALLY TO THESE INVASIONS WILL ENCOURAGE OTHER DISAFFECTED CAMPESINOS TO DO THE SAME IN OTHER AREAS. IN FACT, ON THE SAME DATE, APRIL 8, CAMPESINOS RE-INVADED A 1,600 HECTARE BLOCK IN NORTHER SINALOA AND EXPELLED 200 LABORERS RESULTING IN CROPS BEING LEFT IN THE FIELD AND PREVENTING PREPARATION FOR NEW PLANTINGS. A CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS WAS PREVENTED BY THE TIMELY ARRIVAL OF MILITARY PATROLS TO MAINTAIN CALM.

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